

Medway Council

Workforce Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

2023-2028



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1.0 About this strategy.

1.1 Introduction

We want Medway to be a fair and inclusive place where everyone, employees, and community, have equal access to opportunities and services, and are included and represented in decisions that affect them.

Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy is a fundamental part of continuing to develop Medway Council into the place and organisation we want it to be.

This strategy demonstrates our continued commitment to tackling inequality and promoting diversity and, within this document, we outline our clear vision for an inclusive Council. This vision is built on our Council Plan, Equality Objectives and Equality Action Plan through which we will embrace diversity, attract, and retain the right staff.

This means both working to ensure that Medway is free from discrimination and positively promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion across the delivery of services and within our workforce.

2.0 Aims of this strategy.

2.1 Through this strategy we are aiming:

- for employees of Medway Council, at all levels, to reflect the rich diversity and talent of the whole population of Medway.
- for Medway to be a place where every individual, no matter what their background, level or vocation can thrive and feel able to be fully themselves.

3.0 What is Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

3.1 When we talk about equality, diversity, and inclusion, it can often mean different things to different people. In Medway:

- **Equality** means treating people fairly and making sure they have the same chances and opportunities to fulfil their potential.
- **Equity** means recognising that each person has different circumstances, and some may need more resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.
- **Diversity** is about recognising, respecting, and valuing differences in people. It's about creating a culture and practices that recognise, respect, value, and embrace difference for everyone's benefit.
- **Inclusion** refers to an individual's experience within the workplace and community, and the extent to which they feel valued and included.

4.0 Developing this strategy.

4.1 This strategy has been developed in line with our Council Plan, Council Values, People Strategy, and annual staff survey results.

5.0 Equality Act 2010

5.1 The Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') is our primary equality related piece of legislation. It places a duty on the Council to tackle inequality whilst delivering our services and legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

5.2 The Act is the legal framework to protect the rights of individuals, and advance equality of opportunity for all. The Act provides the prime legislative basis under which this strategy operates.

5.3 S149 of the Equality Act places specific duties on public sector bodies, the Public Sector Equality Duties regulations 2011.

5.4 This sets out our general duty as a public service provider is to have due regard to consider all individuals when carrying out our day-to-day work, whether it is shaping policy, delivering services or in relation to our employees, to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

5.5 In addition, there are two specific duties under the regulation. These are to:

- prepare and publish equality objectives at least every 4 years that are specific and measurable.
- publish information to demonstrate compliance with the Act on an annual basis.

5.6 There are nine protected characteristics outlined in the Act.

Protected characteristics are aspects of a person's identity that makes them who they are. Everyone has at least a few of the nine protected characteristics. It is important to ensure that an individual is not treated less favourably because of theirs. The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage or Civil Partnership

- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Religion or Belief
- Pregnancy and Maternity

6.0 Gender Pay Gap

6.1 Legislation came into effect in 2017 requiring employers to publish figures on gender pay gaps. [Medway Council produces our data](#) on a yearly basis to continually review all areas of the organisation to identify barriers and drivers of equal pay.

7.0 Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap

7.1 The Government has not yet made it mandatory to report on ethnicity pay gaps or disability pay gaps. We are committed to improving the diversity of our workforce and as such we will mirror the gender pay gap formula to start ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting, putting measures in place to address any pay inequality.

8.0 Modern Day Slavery Act 2015

8.1 Legislation requires us to prepare a [slavery and human trafficking statement](#) each financial year, to publish it on our website and to tackle slavery wherever we find it. We recognise the responsibility to understand any potential modern slavery risks related to our services, and to explore what steps we can take to ensure there is no slavery or human trafficking in our business or supply chains.

9.0 Medway Council's Fair Access, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

9.1 The [Fair Access, Diversity, and Inclusion policy](#):

- outlines our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion in the services we provide and throughout the employment life cycle of our workforce,
- explains the behaviours we expect of our people in support of this commitment; and
- sets out the key steps we take to make our culture as inclusive as possible. employment lifecycle.

10.0 Our achievements

10.1 We are proud to have:

10.2 Equality Board

The Equality Board was formed to:

- support the Council's leadership to transform the Council into an open, honest, diverse, and democratic organisation where everyone is valued and included.
- Help create a positive climate for improved fairness, equality, and diversity in all areas of the Council's work, as an employer and provider of services.

10.3 Staff forums and networks

We have several employee groups who:

- provide under-represented groups a safe space to speak.
- provide networking opportunities and community support.
- contribute ideas and suggestions for ways the organisation can be more diverse and inclusive.

Our employee support groups include:

- [Disabled Workers & Carers Network](#)
- [Black and Asian Forum](#)
- [Gender Forum](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Forum](#)
- [Medway Makers](#)
- [Deaf Champions Community of Practice](#)

10.4 Our Ways of Working Policy

- The [Ways of Working policy](#) introduced 4 working styles that feature across the Council - mobile, fixed, hybrid, home – which may be beneficial for those with a disability or long-term health condition, mental health issue, with childcare or caring responsibilities etc.
- Made provision for the ability to request flexible working from day one of employment.

10.5 Accessibility Toolkit

The [Accessibility Toolkit](#) has been created to help make your documents and web pages accessible. We've included guidance, video tutorials, blogs, learning tools and resources.

10.6 Wellbeing Support

Our Wellbeing Support includes:

- [Care First](#)
- [Financial wellbeing hub](#)
- [Employee Wellbeing Champions](#)
- [Workplace Chaplain](#)

10.7 External recognition:

Disability Confident Employer

This means that we:

- have undertaken and completed the Disability Confident self-assessment.
- are taking all the core actions to be a Disability Confident employer.
- are agreeing to at least one action to get the right people for our business and at least one action to keep and develop our people.

11.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Chair of the Equality Board Phil Watts, Chief Operating Officer	Responsible for chairing the Equality Board, raising awareness about equality, diversity and inclusion with Corporate Management Team (CMT) and acting as a role model, decision maker and able to mobilise resources to take action.
HR lead – Sam Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer	Responsible for coaching and mentoring senior leaders, champion of the strategy and the action plan.
Members of the Equality Board	Responsible for setting the equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda, identifying opportunities to enhance the Council's culture, having a drive and passion for making change, having good knowledge of equality, diversity and inclusion issues, supporting the delivery of this strategy and the accompanying action plan.
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Lead Officer – Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning & Programmes	Responsible for championing equality, diversity, and inclusion policy, keeping up to date with external factors, for example, legal requirements, and keeping stakeholders up-to-date, supporting and driving corporate initiatives, coaching and supporting managers to educate and improve their confidence when talking about diversity and inclusion, championing this strategy and the accompanying action plan.
Senior Leadership employee forum sponsors	These roles are in development. Responsible for acting as a role model, supporting, and mentoring the chair or committee of the employee forum, bringing poor practice to the attention of CMT, sharing best practice, building relationships, and acting as a conduit between employees and the organisation.
HR forum sponsors	Responsible for advising on support and resources available to the forum.
Employee Forums – The Disabled Workers and Carers Network, Black and Asian forum, LGBTQI+ forum, Gender Equality forum	Responsible for helping to bring the equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda to life, giving a voice to colleagues, facilitating communications and supporting individuals to bring their whole self to work.

HR Organisational Culture Service – the whole team	Responsible for providing support, information and training to line managers, driving and supporting equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives, monitoring equality, diversity and inclusion in areas such as recruitment, promotion, training and performance and evaluating the impact of these initiatives.
Line Managers – All	Responsible for being familiar with associated policies and championing them, being aware of this strategy’s action plan and their role to support the delivery of it, supporting their employees to participate in employee forums, working with HR to understand the profile of their team, undertaking identified training for managers and communicating with their teams the Council's equality, diversity and inclusion agenda.
Employee’s - All	Responsible for undertaking relevant training, joining employee forums that they feel connected to and passionate about, acting as an ally, calling out behaviour that is not inclusive.

12.0 Data

Equality data is critical because it will show us where inequalities are at their greatest and provide the evidence we need to find solutions and monitor their effectiveness.

We recognise that we need to improve our data to do this effectively and are in the process of reviewing our data.

Current data includes:

[Equality and diversity at the council](#)

[Ward Profiles](#)

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Our Internal Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023 to 2025

To deliver our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2023 to 2028, we have developed an initial 2-year internal Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023 to 2025. The action plan includes 4 overarching objectives.

Objective 1: Leadership.

Leaders embody the [Nolan principles](#) of public life and act as the role models for Medway Council, ensuring an inclusive culture. Leaders see diversity as an integral component of service delivery and engage and role model the Diversity and Inclusion agenda.

Actions	Outcome	Measure	Responsible	Due Date
Provide leaders and managers with annual equality data.	Consistent outcomes across directorates	Initial key equality data agreed by Equality Board by 31.03.24. Initial equality data provided to managers by 30.06.24.	HR	30.06.24
Leaders and managers understand equality data to enable them to drive further improvement.	Leaders and managers who can act to effect change and can tell the story.	Quarterly recruitment data reported to Equalities Board by 31.03.25.	HR	31.03.25
Leaders and managers are trained and have the tools to undertake recruitment and selection fairly.	Increase in diversity of new starters	All managers have attended Complete Medway Manager Training: Equalities by 31.03.2025.	HR	31.03.25

Objective 2: Data led.

Increase declaration rates so we can understand the organisation and be more responsive and put in the right solutions to make a difference. Continue to produce and analyse E, D & I data, for example, gender pay gap, and make recommendations to address any inequality.

Actions	Outcome	Measure	Responsible	Due Date
Further analysis on protected characteristics earning lower and being underrepresented in higher pay bands.	Protected characteristics are equally represented across all pay bands.	Recommendations to reduce inequalities in higher pay bands presented to Equality Board by 31.03.25	HR	31.03.25
Undertake more granular analysis by profession.	Improved data analysis enabling informed, data driven decision making.	New data sets agreed by 31.03.24. New data sets reported quarterly to Equality Board by 30.06.24. New data sets published on medway.gov.uk by 31.03.25 together with actions being taken to reduce inequalities.	HR	31.03.24 30.06.24 31.03.25
Published Pay Gap data is extended to include ethnicity and disability pay gaps.	Increased transparency.	Gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gap data reported quarterly to Equality Board by 31.03.24.	HR	31.03.24
Make recommendations to address the pay gaps and drive a reduction to reduce inequality.	Gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps are closed.	Gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gap data reported on medway.gov.uk by 31.03.25 together with actions being taken to reduce inequalities.	HR	31.03.25

Objective 3: Empowering and enabling all colleagues to thrive and prosper.

We are committed to developing a pipeline of diverse talent for succession and ensuring all colleagues can progress in their careers, in Medway Council and beyond. We will continue fostering a working culture that recognises and reflects the importance of good mental health, wellbeing, and work-life balance. We will track recruitment and promotion activity and understand and monitor this from an equality, diversity, and inclusion perspective to ensure inclusive recruitment and progression.

Actions	Outcome	Measure	Responsible	Due Date
Recruitment policy and process produced and endorsed by the Equality Board and Medway Makers. Including guidance on the importance of diverse interview panels	Recruitment policy and process in place.	Recruitment policy and process endorsed by the Equality Board and Medway Makers by 31.03.25	HR	31.03.25
Application process is anonymised.	Personal information in a separate section on applications that can be separated so that decision makers do not have access to it.	Increase in diversity of new starters by 31.03.25	HR	31.03.25
All job adverts use clear and inclusive language.	Increase in diversity of new starters	Increase in diversity of new starters by 31.03.25	HR	31.03.25
Commence data collection to measure difference between application rate, interview rate and offer rate by protected characteristics.	Difference between application rate, interview rate and offer rate is consistent across protected characteristics.	Consistent rates by 31.03.25	HR	31.03.25
More use of internal and external secondments.	Increased opportunities for career progression and skills development.	Increase in internal promotions by 31.03.25. Increase in secondments by 31.03.25.	HR	31.03.25

Advertise vacancies in a more targeted way and/or on different platforms.	Increased diversity in applicants. Increased application numbers.	Quarterly recruitment data reported to EB from 30.06.24	HR	30.06.24
Commence data collection to measure career progression by protected characteristic.	Everyone has equal opportunity for career progression. Career pathways and career progression data agreed, linked to professional competencies.	Career progression consistent across protected characteristics by 31.03.25. Turnover rates by protected characteristic reported to Equality Board by 31.03.25. Disciplinary and grievance cases by protected characteristics reported to Equality Board by 31.03.25.	HR	31.03.25
Commence data collection to measure training and development opportunities by protected characteristic.	Career pathways and career progression data agreed, linked to professional competencies.	Uptake of training and development opportunities is consistent across protected characteristic by 31.03.25.	HR	31.03.25

Objective 4: Ensuring all colleagues are valued and can contribute to our success.

We strive to embed a culture where all our staff are appreciated, can contribute and be themselves. We want to welcome and value the unique ideas, skills, behaviours, and experiences that our colleagues bring to work because this leads to a more engaged workforce who will make better decisions. Our employee forums are valued and are involved in key workforce decisions.

Actions	Outcome	Measure	Responsible	Due Date
Monitor declaration rates – share not declare communications campaign.	More people declare	Increased declaration rates by 30.06.24	HR	30.06.24
Embed and promote Our Ways of Working and ensure all roles are advertised as part time/job share regardless of pay band.	More part-time and/ or job-sharing opportunities, particularly at Service Manager level and above	Changes in the ratio of part / full time roles at service manager level and above and/or of the flexible working arrangements by 31.03.25	HR	31.03.25
Review Access to Work process so it is easier and more user friendly.	Improved support to return to work and Access to Work cases are consistent across protected characteristics.	Enhanced Access to Work process by 30.06.24.	HR	30.06.24
Review declaration questions to enable more staff to declare and increase declaration rates.	Enhanced workforce data on protected groups to inform our priorities for creating a fairer, more compassionate, and inclusive workplace.	Questions agreed by workforce forums and networks by 31.03.24.	HR	31.03.24
Communication campaign to increase workforce understanding of how	Improved declaration rates	Increase in declaration by 30.09.24	HR	30.09.24

Actions	Outcome	Measure	Responsible	Due Date
declaration data is used to make improvements.				
Conduct annual staff survey.	Workforce view incorporated into working practices.	Annual survey takes place by 30.06.24. Publish examples of how survey data used to improve outcomes by 31.12.24	HR HR	30.06.24 31.12.24
Review support to forums and networks (including considering dedicated time) to ensure representation across protected characteristics.	All workforce has access to support from their community.	All forums and networks have a senior champion by 31.03.24.	HR	31.03.24